MARVEL COMICS

JAN
#24

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

DEAD RECKONING PART 2 OF 3

DEAD POOL

THE DAY BEFORE THE END OF THE WORLD!

DIRECT EDITION

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$1.99 US $2.99 CAN

KELLY • McDANIEL • McFARLAND

THIS IS THE COAST OF *PUERTO RICO*...

JUST OUTSIDE OF *ARECIBO*.

VID FEEDS FROM OUR PEOPLE. *COMPUTER* AUTO-EDITS THE IMAGES FOR *FLUIDITY*...

12:03PM CST

WATCH.

YOU MAY BE WONDERING WHY THERE ISN'T ANY SOUND.

TRUST ME...

...IT'S BETTER THAT WAY.

DEAD RECKONING PART 2 OF 3

I'M NOT GOING TO *LIST* THE *NAMES*, THOUGH I *KNOW* THEM...

12:03PM CST

...I'M NOT GOING TO TELL YOU THAT THEY WERE ALL *GOOD* MEN WITH *PRETTY* FAMILIES AND *PICKET FENCES*, BECAUSE MOST OF THEM *WEREN'T*...

THEY WERE *JUST MEN. MY* MEN...

Stan Lee presents

2nd Stringers & Dead Ringers

JOE KELLY script WALTER McDANIEL pencils WHITNEY McFARLAND inks
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AND *TWENTY-FOUR HOURS* AGO...

12:03PM

...I SAW *EIGHTY-THREE* OF THEM CUT DOWN LIKE *WEEDS*...

...IN *UNDER* A MINUTE FLAT.

MONSTER.

MONSTER...

YOU COULD SAY THAT, *CAPTAIN AMERICA*... YOU COULD ALSO SAY *ICONOCLAST*...

ABOMINATION...

SATAN, IF YOU'RE PARTIAL TO THAT *PARTICULAR* BELIEF SYSTEM...

BUT WE IN THE *MITHRAS DIRECTIVE* CALL HIM TIAMAT... *ULTIMATE CHAOS*, THE *UNDOING* OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT...

...BECAUSE HIS *ONE* FOUL PURPOSE ON THIS PLANET... IS TO DESTROY *THIS*... THIS *PERFECT* BEING... FOR LACK OF A BETTER WORD...

THIS *MESSIAH.*

IMAGINE IT, CAPTAIN... NO MORE *WARS*... NO MORE *FAMINE*... ALL THIS IS *POSSIBLE* ONCE THE MESSIAH ARRIVES.

WE HAVE *PROOF* --

MONSTER...

YES... I *KNOW,* BUT LET'S MOVE ON. THIS ISN'T THE *MONSTER.* THIS IS THE *MESSIAH* --

I WASN'T REFERRING TO YOUR LITTLE *SHOW AND TELL, DIXON...* NOT *TIAMAT* EITHER...

I WAS TALKING ABOUT *YOU.*

ME?

YOU SAID YOU HAD *INFORMATION...* YOU CAN SEE THE *FUTURE*... YOU HAVE AN *INTERGALACTIC CORPORATION* BACKING YOUR PET PROJECT —

-- AND YET YOU *STILL* SENT ALMOST A *HUNDRED MEN* TO CERTAIN DEATH AGAINST THAT... *THING?*

NOT BEING THE SORT OF MAN WHO TAKES THE *FIRST PITCH* WHEN I DON'T KNOW THE *PITCHER...* I HAVE TO *WONDER...*

...WHO'S THE *REAL MONSTER* HERE?

...

-AHEM-

HAVE YOU BEEN PAYING ATTENTION TO ME?!

WE ARE AT *WAR!* NOT FOR A *BORDER DISPUTE*... NOT TO KEEP THE PRICE OF OIL TO *THIRTEEN CENTS A BARREL* —

WE ARE FIGHTING FOR THE *DESTINY OF MANKIND!*

THIS IS THE *DAWN* OF THE *ULTIMATE PEACE!* A DAWN I'VE BEEN WORKING TOWARDS FOR ALMOST *TEN YEARS!*

BUT THAT DOESN'T ANSWER YOUR QUESTION... *YOU,* STILL CLAD IN THE COLORS OF A *COUNTRY* INVOLVED IN MORE *DIRTY PIES* THAN IT HAS *FINGERS* TO FILL...

...YOU CALL *ME* A *MONSTER,* BECAUSE I SENT MY MEN TO BE *KILLED*...

...THAT WAS *NOTHING.*

I HAVE *LIED.* I HAVE *STOLEN.* I HAVE TAKEN TRUSTED COMRADES AND FED THEM *SCREAMING* TO THE WOLVES.

I WOULD STAB MY OWN *MOTHER* IN THE BACK AND *SELL* THE BLOOD TO MY ENEMY IF IT MEANT THAT THE *MESSIAH* WOULD MAKE IT TO EARTH.

IF THAT MAKES ME A *MONSTER,* I *ACCEPT* THE MANTLE WITH PRIDE... BECAUSE I *SACRIFICED* MY HUMANITY SO THAT THE REST OF THE WORLD WOULDN'T LOSE *THEIRS.*

I'VE BROUGHT YOU IN ON THIS... EXPECTING NO *LESS* FROM YOU, CAPTAIN AMERICA.

OR DO I PRESUME TO ASK FOR *TOO MUCH* WITHOUT KISSING YOUR *FLAG FIRST?*

TELL ME WHERE THIS SO-CALLED *"PROOF"* COMES FROM. IF I'M GOING TO FIGHT FOR *YOU...*

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT I'M FIGHTING *FOR.*

MEANWHILE...LIGHT YEARS ACROSS THE VOID THAT SEPARATES EARTH AND CHANDILAR, THE SHI'AR HOME PLANET...

COMMANDER M'KELLEN AND HIS CREW KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THEY'RE FIGHTING FOR...

<<— ENTERED OUR GALAXY THREE HOURS AGO... I THOUGHT IT WAS STEERING CLEAR —>>

<<STEADY, CREW! WE ENGAGE WITH FULL ORDNANCE AS SOON AS WE MAKE VISUAL CONTACT.>>

<<FOR THE GLORY OF THE MAJESTRIX, AND THE FUTURE OF ALL —>>

<<IT WAS... TURNED TOWARDS THE IMPERIAL CITY AT THE LAST MOMENT...>>

<<THERE IT IS!>>

<<NOW, FOR YOUR FAMILIES! FOR YOUR HOME! FIGHT! FIGHT... FI...

<<...BY THE ETERNAL NIGHT...>>

<<IT'S... IT'S... BEAUTIFUL...>>

<<BEAUTIFUL. BEAUTIFUL. BEAUTIFUL. BEAUTIFUL. BEAUTIFUL.>>

NO ONE WILL KNOW WHAT CAUSED THE LIGHTS IN THE SKY OVER CHANDILAR...THEY WILL JUST KNOW...ULTIMATE PEACE.

NO ONE, THAT IS...

...IN ANY POSITION TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE AT THE MOMENT...

FLESHWERKS. HOME TO THE MITHRAS DIRECTIVE'S STAR PROGNOSTICATOR...

MONTGOMERY...?

MONTY, COME ON... LOOK... YOU'RE MAKING THIS HARD FOR *BOTH* OF US... I KNOW YOU LOST CONTACT WITH YOUR "*FRIENDS*" --

— BUT YOU HAVE TO SEE THE *BIG PICTURE* HERE. WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT, DIXON'S GOING TO GET WHAT HE *NEEDS* FROM YOU.

DIXON HAD 'POOL, ZOE AND AL (WHO'S NOT MONTY'S FRIEND) KILLED AT THE END OF THE LAST ISSUE. GUESS THAT ENDS THIS SERIES. -- MATT

TOUCHDOWN FOR THE MESSIAH IS IN A FEW *HOURS*. TIAMAT IS *STILL* OUT THERE, AND WHETHER OR NOT YOU WANT TO *ADMIT* IT...

DEADPOOL IS *DEAD*.

CAPTAIN AMERICA IS THE *NEW MITHRAS*, AND HE NEEDS *GUIDANCE*... WHAT DO YOU SAY?

...

FINE... HAVE IT YOUR WAY... WE'LL BE BACK IN *HALF AN HOUR* TO FORCE *NEW PREDICTIONS* OUT OF YOU... AND IF IT TURNS YOU INTO A HUMAN SALAD... IT'S NOT *MY FAULT*.

SWEET DREAMS...

...DON'T WASTE THEM ON THE *DEAD*.

DEAD... WE'RE *ALL* DEAD, YONGSOO...

...I DIED THE MOMENT YOUR *BOSS* KILLED MY BEST FRIEND...

...Oh, *ZOE*... *WHY?*

SAN FRANCISCO... WHERE NO ONE SEEMS TO HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT WOULD CAUSE A NONDESCRIPT ROW HOUSE ON A QUIET CITY STREET TO SPONTANEOUSLY EXPLODE...

NO ONE EXCEPT --

ALIENS! EITHER DAT OR COMMUNISTS! YOU MARK MY WORDS! THOSE PEOPLE WERE INTO SOMETHING!

STRANGE LIGHTS AT ALL HOURS, SMELL OF DEAD THINGS WHEN THE WIND TURNED WRONG -- AND TALKING! NON-STOP TALKING WHEN THE GUY WAS HOME -- LIKE LIVING NEXT TA SOME PSYCHO PARROT!

ALWAYS HOLLERING INSULTS AT THE OLD BROAD -- YAP YAP YAP! I LEFT MY FRANKIE FOR LESS ABUSE DEN DAT!

ALIEN COMMUNISTS NAMED FRANKIE... -SIGH- IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE, MISS --

HA! OUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK, RIGHT? THESE NAMBY-PAMBY SAN FRAN COPS WOULDN'T KNOW A CLUE IF IT JUMPED UP AND BIT DEM IN THE NIGHTSTICK!

THAT BLAST TOOK OUT MY CABLE, AND NOW MY SCIATICA'S WORKIN' UP AGAIN! BUT DO DEY CARE?

NOOOOO! SOMEBODY'S GOTTA PAY F'R --

CHILL.

...

NO ONE KNOWS WHAT MAKES A ROW HOUSE SUDDENLY EXPLODE... EXCEPT THIS MAN... THIS MYSTERY...

GERRY... THE BUM.

WHAT A MESS... -SIGH- YOU ALWAYS WERE AN OVERACHIEVER, DIXON... DIG THE BLAST PATTERN, THOUGH... PRETTY.

THIS MAN, ABOVE ALL OTHERS, SEES THE GRAND SCHEME... KNOWS THE BIG PLAN...

SOME MIGHT EVEN SAY, HE KNOWS THE TRUTH ABOUT TIAMAT...THE MITHRAS... AND THE MESSIAH...

...BUT TRUTH IS A FLUID THING... AND RIGHT NOW, THE TRUTH IS --

WE ARE SO SCREWED.

LANDAU, LUCKMAN, AND LAKE...UNWITTING HOME TO THE MITHRAS DIRECTIVE...WHERE ONE CANNOT SWING A DEAD CAT WITHOUT SMACKING A SALES PITCH.

THE BEING WILL HELP US TRANSCEND OUR FLAWED NATURE. GLOBAL ENLIGHTENMENT WILL RESULT...A RENAISSANCE... BECAUSE OF YOU...THE MITHRAS --

IF THIS IS ALL TRUE, WHY HAVEN'T YOU TOLD ANYONE? WHY KEEP THIS A SECRET?

HOW CAN YOU ASK THAT QUESTION? YOU, WHO CAN COUNT OFF A HUNDRED PEOPLE WHO WOULD KILL TO KEEP THE WORLD IN A STATE OF CHAOS --

-- REAL "MONSTERS" WHO WOULD DO EVERYTHING IN THEIR POWER TO STOP THE MESSIAH IF THEY KNEW ABOUT IT.

TRUST ME. TIAMAT IS ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH. THAT'S WHY WE'VE BLACKED OUT ALL THE RADIO TELESCOPES AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS...

RIGHT... OKAY, I CAN BUY THAT, EVEN IF IT DOES SHOW A HINT OF MEGALOMANIA. BUT THERE'S STILL MORE THAT NEEDS TO BE ANSWERED...

LIKE, WHY NOW? WHY ME? WHY CAN'T I CALL THE AVENGERS IN ON THIS --?

-- AND IS THAT THING REALLY NECESSARY? IT'S RIDICULOUS...AND EMBARRASSING.

ER...IT'S NEW YORK CITY IN THE FUTURE... THEY LIKE MONUMENTS --

ARTIST'S RENDERING: NEW YORK CITY CIRCA 2002

THE ANSWER TO ALL YOUR QUESTIONS, CAPTAIN...IS DESTINY. COME ALONG, I'LL SHOW YOU.

IT IS WRITTEN, "THE LONGEST JOURNEY...

...IS THE JOURNEY INWARDS..."

...OF HE WHO HAS CHOSEN HIS DESTINY."

RIGHT...

...BUT WHAT ABOUT HE WHO HAS HIS DESTINY CHOSEN FOR HIM?

IN THESE CASES...ALL THE RULES CHANGE... THE PERSPECTIVE GETS SKEWED.

HUNTER CAN BECOME [redacted]E... [redacted] CAN DECAY INTO SACRIFICE...

SCHRA-AWP

...OR A MONSTER...

CAN BECOME A HERO.

THE ATLANTIC OCEAN...ON THE EDGE OF A VAST EXPANSE OF UNDERWATER [redacted] CALLED THE ATLANTIS FRACTURE ZONE...

<<CHAMPION...>>

©TRANSLATED FROM A BIZZARE ALIEN TONGUE- --MATT

<<WHAT? YOU?! I...I WAS JUST ABOUT TO BEGIN MY MEDITATION, HONORED COUNCIL...>>

<<AND ON WHAT, PRAY TELL, WILL YOU MEDITATE..?>>

<<THE PRICE OF RECKLESSNESS?!>>

<<I...I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN... I HAVE HIDDEN MYSELF PERFECTLY, MILOS. NO ONE WILL SEE ME --->>

<<YOU FOOL! YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT!>>

<<THE MITHRAS! YOU ALLOWED HIM TO ESCAPE!>>

<<NO... THE DEMON IS DEAD... I KNOW HE IS...>>

<<A BODY! IS THERE A BODY?>>

<<DID YOU -TIK- DRINK HIS -TIK- BLOOD?>>

<<HAVE YOU PROOF?>>

<<DID YOU WRAP HIM IN THE CEREMONIAL SHROUD?>>

<<I-- STOP IT! I...I KILLED HIM... I KNOW IT...HE COULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED.>>

<<IT WAS HIS DESTINY. THE MITHRAS IS GONE...HE WILL NOT BE THERE TO PROTECT THE DESTROYER.>>

<<IF YOU ARE SO CERTAIN, CHAMPION...THEN WHY DO YOU NOT LOOK ME IN THE EYE?>>

<<VERY WELL... PRAY THAT YOU ARE RIGHT, CHAMPION... FOR IF THE MITHRAS STILL LIVES...>>

<<...THEN OUR UNIVERSE WILL SURELY BE CONSUMED BY THAT VILE DESTROYER HE PROTECTS.>>

<<THE DESTROYER WILL FALL MILOS... IT'S MY DESTINY... NO?>>

CHICAGO...

THAT DEN OF SIN AND DEGRADATION KNOWN AS THE HELLHOUSE...

DEADPOOL?

...SO, WANNA HEAD UNDER THE BLEACHERS?

DEADPOOL?

AND WHO GIVES A SWEET POTATO IF THE DOW ISH GONE HIT TEN THOUSAND?!

BUB.

DEADPOOL?

C.F.! GET DOWN OR SO HELP ME...

EVER GET THAT SINKING FEELING THAT TEN YEARS OF PREP HAVE JUST GONE SOUTH, BIG TIME? TOTALLY UNCOOL.

SPACE... CLOSER...

WILL YOU REPEAT THAT LAST PART, ENSIGN MROK?

ENSIGN MROK OF THE HIGH SKRULL EMPIRE REPORTING FROM SATURN ORBIT...

EVERYTHING IS FINE... EVERYTHING...

I SEE NOW... NO NEED TO FIGHT... NO NEED TO CONQUER...

NO NEED TO DO ANYTHING... IT WILL ALL BE FINE... ALL BE FI—

POOM

NOW THAT'S SOMETHING YOU DON'T SEE EVERY DAY, I BET...

GOD IN HEAVEN... WHAT IS IT?

THAT'S THE *WINDOW* TO OUR *FUTURE*, SIR...

...A FINELY TUNED *PRECOGNITIVE CLAIRVOYANT*... WE CALL IT *MONTY*.

HE LOOKS LIKE HE'S IN *PAIN*.

THE SURGICAL *ADJUSTMENTS* WERE NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE *FULL* POTENTIAL. IT'S NOT *PRETTY*, BUT IT WORKS LIKE *GANGBUSTERS*, AND IT'S *OURS*.

MONTY'S THE ONE WHO CHOSE *YOU*... TOLD US THAT YOU WOULD BE THE *MITHRAS*. IT'S *STEERED* THE PROGRAM THIS FAR —

"*IT'S OURS*"?! THAT'S A *HUMAN BEING* THERE! NOT A *MACHINE*!

YOU TALK ABOUT *SAVING* THE WORLD, AND YOU DO *THIS* TO A HUMAN BEING WITH *NO REMORSE*?! I WANT THAT MAN RELEASED THIS *INSTANT* --

STEEEVE...

WHAT THE —?

STEEVE... *NOT*... IN *PAIN*... MUST *TALK* TO YOU —

HOW DO YOU KNOW MY *REAL NAME*?

I KNOW... *EVERYTHING* ABOUT YOU... *STEEEVE*... I KNOW ABOUT *NIGHTMARE*... *NOT* YOUR FAULT...

NUCLEAR WINTER, HIS BAD DREAM...©

HOW..? *NO ONE* KNOWS ABOUT THAT...

©SEE CAPTAIN AMERICA #9-12 FOR FULL SCOOP! -- MATT

I KNEW... *WEEKS AGO*... I KNOW... *ALL*...

YOU *ARE* THE *MITHRAS*, STEVE... STOP *TIAMAT*... OR WE'RE *ALL DOOMED*... IN THE *SAND*, STEVE... THE *SAAAAAND*...

I'VE SEEN *ENOUGH.*

GET THIS *STRAIGHT,* DIXON...

I *DON'T* TRUST YOU.

I *DON'T LIKE* YOU, OR THE WAY YOU *TREAT* PEOPLE.

BUT I'M STARTING TO *BELIEVE* YOU. SOMETHING IS HAPPENING HERE... SOMETHING *IMPORTANT.*

AND THOUGH I DON'T BELIEVE IN WORDS LIKE *"DESTINY"... "MITHRAS"* OR [redacted]*AH"*...

...I'M *INVOLVED* NOW... AND I'LL SEE THIS THROUGH TO THE *END.*

BUT THE FIRST INSTANT I FIND YOU'RE NOT ON THE *LEVEL* --

THANK YOU, CAPTAIN AMERICA... I PROMISE YOU *WON'T* REGRET THIS --

DON'T MAKE *PROMISES* TO ME, DIXON... I DON'T *NEED* THEM. JUST... DO SOMETHING TO *COMFORT* THAT MAN, FOR PITY'S SAKE...

WELL... *CONGRATULATIONS, MONTY...*

BROKEN HEART AND ALL... YOU *FINALLY* DID SOMETHING *RIGHT.*

ZOE WOULD BE *PROUD.*

JERK.

=SIGH= AT LEAST *SOMETHING* WENT RIGHT TODAY... NO ONE THOUGHT TO MOVE YOU OUT OF THE BASEMENT BEFORE [redacted] COULD CHAT...

WAKE UP, FRIEND...

=HGGK= McGUIRE... '99... =HMMRF= FIFTY-TWO --

WH-*WHAT* --?

TAKE IT SLOW, EASY RIDER... THE ENERGY SURGE DIXON USED TO *INDUCE* YOUR PRECOGNITION IS NASTY. JUST LET IT WASH OVER YOU.

WHO --? OH, MY *GOD*... G-GERRY?

YEAH, IT'S ME... S'FUNNY, I FORGET THAT [redacted] TIME YOU SEE ME, IT'S LIKE THE *FIRST* TIME AGAIN...

I *PROMISE* WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER, NO MORE MINDWIPES FOR YOU. FROM DIXON OR MYSELF --

MINDWIPES? I DON'T UNDERSTAND... EVERYTHING IS... *MELTING*... LIKE TRYING TO GRAB WATER. NOTHING MAKES *SENSE*...

YOU... DIXON... *ZOE*...

I KNOW. I'M SORRY THAT I'VE HAD TO *LEAVE* YOU HERE WITH THESE IDIOTS ALL THESE YEARS. THEY'LL BURN YOU OUT WITH THE DRUGS AND THE *TREATMENTS* BEFORE —

-- BEFORE... THE *END* COMES... IT'S NOT *RIGHT*, BUT IT'S ALL WE CAN DO... FOR *NOW*, THOUGH, I NEED YOU TO *FOCUS*...

I NEED YOU TO WORK YOUR *MAGIC* AND TELL ME IF YOU CAN *SEE* --

IS SHE...

=SIGH= ALL RIGHT, *LOOK*... *QUID PRO QUO*. I'LL TELL *YOU* SOMETHING, YOU TELL *ME* SOMETHING...

SHE'S ALIVE.

ALIVE?!

ZOE? GERRY, DO YOU KNOW WHAT *HAPPENED* TO ZOE?

I CAN BARELY REMEMBER HER *FACE*...

I'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT AS SOON AS YOU ANSWER THIS EXTREMELY SERIOUS *QUESTION*...

((AM I THE CHAMPION?))
((COUNSEL, I BEG YOUR [redacted] AND VISION...))
((YES... YOU WILL DELIVER US FROM THE DESTROYER...))
((WILL [redacted] COME TO THE SAND THAT DAY?))
((YES... WE SEE THE CEREMONIAL SHROUD... THOUGH WE CANNOT SAY TO WHOM SHE CLINGS... PERHAPS TO YOUR NEXT FOE, A HUMAN CLAD IN STARS...))
((DOES UNCERTAINTY FRIGHTEN YOU?))
((I HAVE NO FEAR.. DESTINY HAS CHOSEN ME --))
((BECAUSE YOU ARE THE JUST...))
((YOU -TIK- ARE THE RIGHTEOUS...))
((YOU ARE THE FEARLESS...))
((YOU ARE THE LAST HOPE OF ALL WHO WOULD LIVE FREE IN THE UNIVERSE...))
((AND DESTINY CALLS YOU AT LAST...))
((TO THE SAND...))
((TO THE SAND... THANK YOU, COUNSEL... WHEN NEXT WE SPEAK...))
((... MY ENEMIES WILL LIE IN ROT... AND THE DESTROYER WILL BE UNDONE. THIS I SWEAR.))

ARE YOU *READY*, CAPTAIN AMERICA?

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I STOOD *HERE*... ON THE VERGE... AT THE POINT OF *NO RETURN*...

PREPARED TO RISK IT *ALL* FOR *GOD* AND *COUNTRY*? WHAT AM I DOING IT FOR *THIS* TIME?

...MY INSTINCTS TELL ME THIS IS A *GOOD* FIGHT.

SOMETHING... *IMPORTANT* IS HAPPENING... AND FROM THE *FRONT*, I CAN AT LEAST ENSURE THAT WHATEVER THE *TRUTH* IS BEHIND DIXON AND HIS "MESSIAH"...

NOT FOR DIXON... NOT FOR *MONUMENTS* OR A SO-CALLED "*MESSIAH*" I'VE NEVER SEEN... BY ALL COUNTS, I *SHOULD* SHUT THIS PLACE DOWN...

BUT I'VE GOT [redacted] FEELING THERE'S [redacted] LOT *MORE* TO THIS THAN MEETS THE *EYE*...

...THE GAME WILL BE PLAYED BY *PROPER* RULES, THE JOB WILL GET DONE *RIGHT*, AND WHO KNOWS...

...MAYBE WE'LL MAKE *PEACE ON EARTH* IN THE PROCESS.

COME OUT, COME OUT, *WHEREVER* YOU ARE...

SAN FRANCISCO... GOLDEN GATE PARK.

IT'S OVER... IT'S *ALL* OVER... WE'RE DOOMED... *EVERYTHING'S* OVER... THE WORLD... *HUMANITY*... NO PROMOTION... NO *NOTHING*... DOOMED —

=WHEW= *EXPLOSION*...

CEASELESS *WHINING* FROM THE *YUPPIE* CHICK...

EXPLOSION...

WHINING...

EXPLOSION...

IT'S *NO* CONTEST... I SHOULDA GOT *BLOWN UP*.

ENOUGH ALREADY WITH THE *"WE'RE DOOMED"* CLAPTRAP, CULLODEN!

SWAK

MY EARS *FINALLY* STOPPED RINGING... I DON'T WANT YOU TO MAKE 'EM *START* AGAIN!

OH, AL... YOU *POOR WOMAN*... NOT JUST *SIGHTLESS*, BUT BLIND TO THE *TRUTH* AS WELL...

DON'T YOU GET IT? DEADPOOL'S *GONE*... THE *MITHRAS*... THE *HERALD* OF THE MESSIAH...

WITHOUT *HIM* IT *ALL* FALLS APART. *TIAMAT DESTROYS* THE MESSIAH... THE WORLD FALLS TO *RUIN* —

IN CASE YOU DIDN'T NOTICE, ZOE, INSTEAD OF BEIN' GUESTS OF HONOR AT AN *INSTANT BARBECUE*, WE'RE STILL *BREATHIN'* ON A PARK BENCH!

WE'RE *ALIVE!* WASN'T *NO ONE* BACK *HOME* BUT THE THREE OF US WHEN IT *BLEW*, SO IF *WE'RE* STILL KICKIN', IT'S BECAUSE *WADE* DID SOMETHING!

TRUST ME, AS SOMEONE WHO *LIVED* WITH THE MAN FOR *YEARS*, WADE ISN'T THE *SELFLESS* TYPE. IF WE'RE ALIVE, HE'S ALREADY CAMPED OUT SOMEWHERE WATCHING *WORLD'S WORST POLICE CHASES* AND DROOLING INTO AN EMPTY *SIX PACK* —

WHOA!

SCHUNKOOM

WHAT ON *EARTH* —?

WHAT'S *HAPPENING?* IS THIS SOME STUPID *CANDID CAMERA* STUNT, 'CAUSE I SWEAR I'LL *KILL* THAT *FUNT* KID —

VRRRRRRMM

IT'S A *DOOR!* SOMEONE'S COMING —

OH... MY... *GOD*...

WHAT? WHAT? *WHAAAT?*

IT'S --

YES, *YES*, CULLODEN! IT'S ME! *GERRY LEQUARRE* FORMERLY OF LANDAU, LUCKMAN, LAKE, *AND LEQUARRE*, THE *FOURTH L!*

CALL *SHERLOCK*, TELL HIM TO STAY *HOME* -- MYSTERY *SOLVED!*

GERRY? WADE'S *HOMELESS PAL* GERRY? *RIGHT*. YEAH. MAKES *PERFECT* SENSE, JUST LIKE EVERYTHING *ELSE* TODAY.

B-BUT... YOU'RE *DEAD!*

BOOGA-BOOGA! I'M *BACK*, OOOOH! AM I A *SPIRIT*? A *HALLUCINATION*? NO ONE KNOWS FOR SURE!

GET A *GRIP*, CULLODEN. PEOPLE LIKE *ME* PLAY DEATH LIKE A *FIDDLE*.

I WENT UNDERGROUND *YEARS AGO* WHEN AN ATTEMPT WAS MADE ON MY LIFE BY SOMEONE IN THE *COMPANY*.© THE *MITHRAS DIRECTIVE* WAS TOO *IMPORTANT* TO *ABANDON*...

SINCE THEN I'VE KEPT *TABS* ON IT, WORKING *BEHIND* THE SCENES TO GET DEADPOOL *READY* FOR HIS BIG DAY, GET DIXON AND HIS *SECOND STRINGER* INTO *POSITION* --

© AS STRONGLY ALLUDED TO IN ISH #23. -- CORPORATE MATT

-- AND I'VE KEPT THE UNIVERSE'S *DO-GOODERS* AWAY SO THEY DON'T *MUCK* THINGS UP FOR US... I'M A BLOODY FREAKIN' *GENIUS*.

NOT TO BE RUDE... NOT THAT IT'D MATTER CONSIDERING THAT *SMELL*... BUT IF YER Oh SO HIP T'WHAT'S HAPPENIN', WHY THE *ATTITUDE?*

SIMPLE, MY DEAR... DESPITE ALL MY *MACHINATIONS* AND SUBTLE MOVEMENTS...

...DESPITE THE FACT THAT THERE'S A *COSMIC MESSIAH*, AN *ALIEN ASSASSIN*, AND A *SENTINEL OF LIBERTY* ALL CONVERGING UPON *EGYPT* EXACTLY AS THEY *SHOULD*...

...I'M MISSING *ONE* COMPONENT TO MY *MASTER PLAN*...

...I Uh... LOST *DEADPOOL*.

WHAT?!

WELL... AIN'T THAT FREAKIN' *RICH?*

"FOR EONS... I HAVE BEEN HERE...

"OBSERVING THE SAME BLUE-GREEN ORB... A SIMPLE PLANET THAT HAS COME TO MEAN SO MUCH MORE TO ME...

"I HAVE SEEN EARTH AND HER INHABITANTS AT THEIR TIMES OF GREATEST SPLENDOR... AND THEIR AGES OF DARKEST DESPAIR... ALWAYS... HUMANITY PREVAILS..."

...YET TODAY... FOR THE FIRST TIME IN GENERATIONS... I FEAR FOR THEIR FUTURE. FOR MY FUTURE.

I CANNOT DIVINE THE PURPOSE OF THE CREATURE THAT HURTLES TOWARDS EARTH...

...I KNOW ONLY THAT IT IS A BEING OF SUCH POWER AND MAGNIFICENCE AS TO RIVAL GALACTUS HIMSELF...

AND HAS ALREADY TOUCHED THOUSANDS OF PLANETS... LEAVING BEHIND IN ITS WAKE...

COMPLETE...

AND... UTTER...

BLISS.

Next: The Second Coming!

DEADLINES

PAUL TUTRONE
ASSISTANT EDITOR

MATT IDELSON
EDITOR

BOB HARRAS
CHIEF

Dear *Deadlines*,

Well, where do I start? The first thing is that issue #21 is totally awesome and one of my favorite issues of DEADPOOL yet; the writer and artists are great. I have always wanted a DEADPOOL series and now that there is I say thank you very much.

My first question is when will you show Weasel and Deuce the devil-dog? They haven't been seen since issue #14. My second question is when will Siryn and Deadpool get together again? She hasn't been seen even longer than Weasel. Also, will you have a rematch between Deadpool and T-Ray, or Typhoid Mary? Lastly, in the future, will you show a meeting between Cable and Deadpool, or Kane and Deadpool?

Well, that's it. Thanks for reading this and keep up the awesome art of issue #21, it's been some of the best art yet. Thanks again.

Jordan Miller
Tampa, FL

Thanks for reading, Jordan! It's the fans who buy Deadpool every month that keep the adventures rolling, avoiding the cancellation monster -- so, tell your friends.

As for your questions -- we're sure that when Weasel is ready he'll show his face, and we think he'll be ready reeaal soon. As for Siryn, she kinda showed up in issue #22, but with Dead Reckoning upon him, Wade has his hands full. Also, in that very same issue, Deadpool and Cable had a tiny (yet revealing) scuffle. Ahem... we mean "revealing in regards to their respective personalities." Get your minds outta the gutter!

Dear Demented Deadliners,

I have been completely brain-washed, thanks to your subliminal messages. I love Deadpool, utterly and completely. I'll never know how you manage to come up with so much fun and insanity every month, and still keep this book fresh. Joe Kelly, I wish I could write like you-- I love that Deadpool battlesuit.

I'm gonna try to keep this short and sweet (seems that some people don't print long letters). So, here are my questions, nice, numbered, and ready to be answered:

Why does Wade speak yellow words? You're not planning on turning Dixon into a villain, are you? I think he's far too cool for that. I dig Dixon's sarcasm, and the way he dealt with Herbert in issue #15. ("You're going to repaint that wall, you know.") Speaking of the explodey head guy, will Herbert make another appearance? He was sooo cute. And when is Weasel coming back? I've been missing him as well.

I read somewhere that 'Pool beat Wolverine once. Is this true? If it is, where, when, and how did it happen? I would love to read about it.

Oopsie. Seems this letter got sort of long. I'd better stop now, before I use even more space. So until Wade becomes a monk and takes a vow of silence, make mine Marvel!

Gwen Kortsen
Norway

Thanks for writing, Gwen. It's really cool to receive mail from a place as far away as Norway, but the truth isn't out there--it's right here, in the letters page!

Here are some answers: Wade doesn't speak yellow words, he speaks black words in yellow balloons, yeesh! But seriously, 'Pool has a unique voice, and we want to be sure everyone knows it! Dixon isn't exactly a villain, but he's also not the nicest of people, either. You're right, Herbert was cute--right up to the part where his head exploded. When is Weasel coming back? Uh, will somebody find Weasel, please!? And before we forget, Deadpool fought the uncanny furball back in WOLVERINE #88!

Dear *Deadlines*,

I have loved Deadpool ever since one of my friends in elementary school recommended that I go to the comic shop and purchase DEADPOOL: THE CIRCLE CHASE #1. For about six years I have been nuts about the merc-with-a-mouth. I just purchased DEADPOOL #21 and it is great. Why the heck does Dixon not want Deadpool to be the Mithras even though Monty predicted that he would be? Dixon is going to mess the whole thing up. Also, I still do not understand what these blackout troops have to do with anything. Anyway, Deadpool will have something to say about that... he always does.

Hey, that statue of him a bunch of issues back should be plenty of encouragement for him. Is he going to have to kill this Tiamat--who is to destroy the Messiah--or is he just going to put it into some type of eternal imprisonment? At least that would save his humanity. I was surprised to see that Cable has just now arrived in the series; I would have thought that they would have met earlier. Well, to make a very long story short, Deadpool is great and I am proud of everyone on the creative staff. Keep up the good work.... and the wise-cracking.

Carl Meyer, Jr.
Sacramento, CA

And we're proud that you like the book, Carl. As for your queries: The blackout troops are LL&L's way of keeping the whole Mithras thing their secret. As for Deadpool's statue, monuments can be destroyed and others can be erected in their place. After all, Monty said Deadpool would be the Mithras, but he didn't say what the end result would be.

Dear *Deadlines*,

I wrote this letter to tell you how I love this series of yours. I really like Deadpool's wisecracking self. I thought it was the end of the world when I heard it was going to be canceled, although I knew that he would not disappear if everyone sent letters of protest. I hope you will do all you can to stop this. Sure hope you can persuade anyone there to continue the series. Now, I have some questions:

What is *Dead Reckoning*? Will there ever be a team-up between Deadpool and Wolverine, or Deadpool and Spider-Man? Is this series really gonna be canceled? If yes, why and when? (Please don't let this happen.)

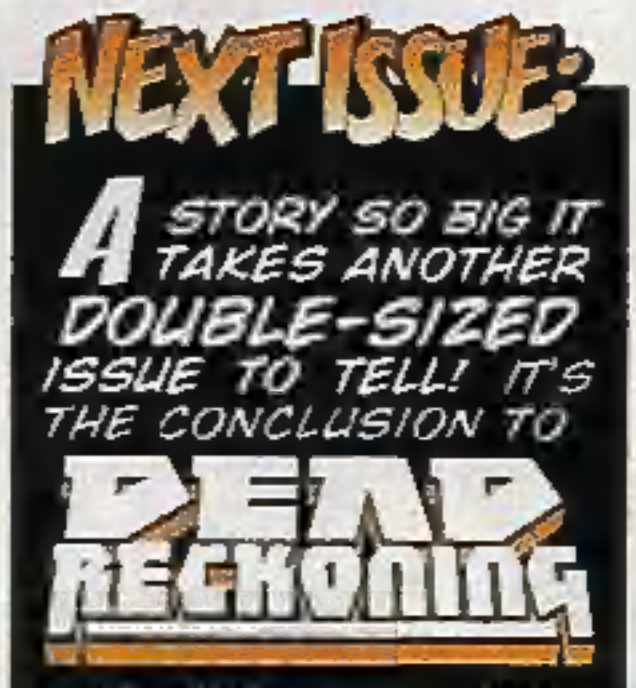
Can you write an issue with Deadpool not having his costume on? Will Deadpool ever stop talking? Who or what is LL&L? Where can I buy a Deadpool poster?

Reginald De Jesus
Union City, CA

Don't worry, Reginald, it's not the end of the world. According to the cover, it's the day before the end of the world.

***Dead Reckoning* is the culmination of a whole ton of stuff we've been setting up since issue #1. Sorry, no Wolvie or Spidey stories are in the works right now, although Spidey did make an appearance for about a panel in issue #11. Thanks to you, our loyal and loving readers, it looks like we've avoided the cancellation monster for the time being. We're doing what we can, but we need you guys to continue doin' what yer doin'!**

Deadpool with no costume? No. No, we can't do that. That would be wrong. Deadpool will stop talking only if he's canceled, and even then we can't make any guarantees. Landau, Luckman and Lake is the intergalactic holding firm (whatever that means) which is secretly funding the Mithras Directive. As for a poster, just buy an extra issue and rip out a piece of that cool McDaniel art to hang on the wall! (Please ignore shameless scheme to get people to buy more copies.)


NEXT ISSUE:
A STORY SO BIG IT TAKES ANOTHER DOUBLE-SIZED ISSUE TO TELL! IT'S THE CONCLUSION TO
DEAD RECKONING
AND THE CONCLUSION TO EVERYTHING YOU KNOW OR THINK YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS BOOK! WHO WILL LIVE? WHO WILL DIE? AND WHILE WE'RE AT IT, WHERE THE HECK IS DEADPOOL? HERE'S A HINT: BUY NEXT ISSUE AND FIND OUT! (AND BRING A BATHING SUIT... IT'S GONNA BE A HOT ONE!)

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